

Evidence of community involvement

- 1: Letter from Lesley Price, teacher at Yorkley Primary School
- 2: Letter from Richard Robbins and Mary Bruce of Lydney Youth Cafe
- 3: Letter from the Asha Centre
- 4: Letter from Andrew Worsley, local resident
- 5: Excerpts of letters from Jill Raymond and Fran Challice, attendees of Sunday Gardening days (full letters in Appendix G)

Letter 1

From: Lesley Price <lesley.price1234@yahoo.co.uk>

;

To: Lesley Price <lesley.price1234@yahoo.co.uk>;

Subject: Yorkley School

Sent: Tue, Jul 22, 2014 5:29:45 PM

To whom it may concern,

I would like to bring to your attention to the activities that the residents of Yorkley Court have been doing at Yorkley Primary School over the last year and a half.

They have been very generous with their time and resources to the school. They have helped us deliver a variety of eco focused tasks to all the classes last year.

They have been a regular member to our after school eco club for the year and half.

During their own time they have helped us clear a very overgrown nature area with the help of the children. As they have helped clear the area they have taught them the different plants and trees. As areas were defined they then grew us some seedlings to transplant into our nature area and vegetable containers at no cost to ourselves. Without their help this area would still be developing.

Best regards,

Lesley Payne

Eco club organiser and class teacher.

Letter 2

Yorkley Community Farm have volunteered much needed support in the re-generation of the Lydney Youth Cafe garden. The garden could be enjoyed by the numerous community groups that share the building on a weekly basis. Unfortunately there is an intimidating amount of work to do to make it safe and create a garden. We need to build wheelchair access and re-build walls as well as heavy landscaping before the gardening can begin. It is a time consuming and expensive project.

We faced the daunting task of clearing the site which is overgrown, polluted and full of rubble. Without the Yorkley group's help and expertise our little team of two would have far too much to do. The group are also advising on design which requires expert knowledge on plants and gardening. Once we have finalised designs and planting schemes they have very kindly offered to help create the garden and provide some plants.

With funding, time and man power being rare and precious resources Yorkley Farm's help is making the garden possible, creating community links and crucially providing us with moral support. When we meet in the jungle of a site on a Saturday afternoon, many hands make lighter work. We cannot thank the group enough.

Richard Robbins and Mary Bruce.

Letter 3 - Asha Centre



26 September 2013

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I'm writing this letter in support of the Yorkley Court Farm Community.

I set out below who we are, our connection with the Yorkley Group and our opinion of them.

- **Who we are**

The ASHA Centre is a British charity based in the Forest of Dean. We work for the empowerment of young people, sustainable development and peace and reconciliation world wide.

The Centre is a hub of intercultural activities, hosting a range of educational and environment based programmes throughout the year.

- **Our Connection to the Yorkley Project**

For the last twelve months we have been running a series of week long residential training courses on the topic of sustainable living. An essential part of these courses has been a visit to the Yorkley Community. We have done ten of these projects in the last year. The courses have been attended by over two hundred people.

These courses have been funded by the European Union through a grant administered by the British Council. They are free of charge for people to attend.

The first course we ran on this topic in October 2012 was attended by one of the Yorkley Community members. This meeting led to our first visit to the Yorkley project.

When we visit Yorkley we are welcomed warmly by the residents. They show us around the project, explain the principles behind what they are doing and their connection to the various aspects of sustainable living - social, legal, economic and environmental. It is always a highlight of the course.

Our students consistently evaluate their visit to Yorkley as particularly significant. For example one wrote "I have been deeply inspired by the vision of the Yorkley Court crew, communicated by James (Scrivens) in his wonderful tour"

- **Our opinion of the Yorkley Court Community Project**

The Yorkley Court Project is an inspiring example of ideals in practice. Their community as they have explained it to us, comes out of the international Via Campesina movement. The movement defends small-scale sustainable agriculture as a way to promote social justice and dignity, and represents about 200 million farmers world wide. It is an autonomous, pluralist and multicultural movement, independent from any political, economic or other type of affiliation.

The people we have met at Yorkley have looked after us with warmth and kindness. They come across to our groups as intelligent, principled, and courageous. They are always open to the questions of our participants and respond with calmness, clarity and dignity. We are very grateful to them for hosting our groups and supporting the work of the ASHA Centre.

If you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

Mark Gifford
Director

The ASHA Centre, Lower Spout Lane, Flaxley, GL17 0EA
(+44) 0 1594 822 330 ashacentre@yahoo.co.uk

www.ashacentre.org

Charity No 1058320

VAT Reg No 941 1927 27

Letter 4

Letter to Support Yorkley Court's Application for Planning Permission

Dear Sir / Madam

Re: Yorkley Court's Community Involvement

I am a 68 year old local resident, living at Cherry Tree Cottage, Corner Road, Pillowell, Lydney for 26 years, and am a retired Probation Officer.

I am involved in two groups who buy and process firewood sourced from the Forest of Dean. Each group consists of five people living in the Forest of Dean. We buy tree trunks, mainly thinings, in ten foot lengths by a lorry load and cut and split the wood, before transporting it in builders bags to our homes and storing it for two years. We have then achieved good, cheap, sustainable firewood for our use and actively developed community spirit in local groups working together on the wood. The groups were set up to encourage the use of local firewood for heating so as to decrease the overall emission of CO2. We have kept to small group sizes to encourage the feeling of group loyalty and so Community Involvement.

For these groups the most difficult need is one of suitable land on which to process the wood. In the winter of 2013 we approached the residents at Yorkley Court to see if they would allow us to use some of the space there for this purpose. They enthusiastically agreed to this request and allowed us to use the areas that were most suitable to our needs, taking into account the needs of other land users.

Two loads of wood were delivered to Yorkley Court in February and March 2014. The first load was processed and removed by May, the second load in June. The residents of Yorkley Court were supportive, agreeable and pleasant to deal with throughout our work there, and helped to make this a very enjoyable exercise, while putting up with the noise of our chainsaws.

I am also a member of a "Seed-Savers" gardening group with about thirty members from all over the Forest of Dean. We meet roughly once a month, and some residents of Yorkley Court have attended our meetings, usually in each others gardens, since they first became established at Yorkley Court. We have met on one occasion at Yorkley Court early on, and have arranged to meet there again in September 2014 when we will not only view the substantial and productive gardens they have created, but also have the services of a herbalist to look at the uses of wild plants growing there. Residents from Yorkley Court are unfailingly enthusiastic and encouraging in our discussions in the Seed – Savers group and they bring many interesting seeds and plants to swap and give away to our seed swap meetings.

Residents from Yorkley Court have set up and run the Forest Food Hub, a marvellous system for making local organic food and foodstuffs widely available at a low price. It has been growing steadily. It helps support many small local food producers, giving them a substantial increase in business, and now involves a number of volunteers living elsewhere in the Forest of Dean in the organisation and distribution of foodstuffs. While this does not currently take place at Yorkley Court, they do supply mushroom growing kits and seedlings that have been developed at Yorkley Court.

Those living at Yorkley court are a remarkably pleasant and enthusiastic group of young people who are exploring, for the future, ways of living and producing food more sustainably as part of a Community Farm. It would be a crying shame if room cannot be found for them to do this in the Forest of Dean.

Yours,

Andrew Worsley

5: Excerpts of letters

Jill Raymond:

"I go to the weekly Sunday community vegetable garden work days where I meet old friends and new people. We may work alone or share a job with others, who may be other volunteers or be residents and we chat during our tea and cake break. Some of us are experienced gardeners, some are not, but we all learn as we go along. Some people bring their children and they, parents and kids alike, value the chance to get away from their computer screens. We pick what needs picking and take some produce home. We are not only growing food, we are growing social cohesion, most notably across generations. We see the weekly growth of our plants and of our friendships. We are building healthy communities."

Fran Challice:

"For the past month I've joined the Sunday community allotment day where visitors share skills, production, all-age cohesion, recycle and co-operate in small teams. The day celebrates the central aims of good earth management and food production. Skills, food, meal times and planning come together with families and fast growing friendships. It's an opportunity for my family to meet interesting, intelligent and local folk with peaceful and educational aims. A pleasant surprise is that I now plan my own home allotment with fair confidence."